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ABSTRACT

This paper, given as a speech, proposes a stronger school partnership with the business community. Some of the reasons listed for the commitment of business education are (1) students and teachers are customers and need to know how to use products and services effectively; (2) when education prepares students for good jobs, the students become better customers and informed decision-makers; (3) when education does not prepare students, the burden of remedial education and training falls on business--which is costly; (4) business cares about having its taxes used wisely; and (5) students are the children of employees and the skills they learn today will affect the quality of their future lives. The paper suggests the gap between high school graduates and the jobs they seek is widening. It details the work of a Chicago task force of employers and community members who set up and fostered a successful career education program. (Author/LD)

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KINGSLEY LECTURE
Tuesday, July 17, 1979
1979 National Seminar
National School Public Relations Assoc.

BETSY ANN PLANK
Assistant Vice President, Illinois Bell
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Society of America

I come to your platform today with both my welcome and appreciation. A welcome from this Chicagoan to all of you who are meeting in this lively city I'm proud to call home. After an examination of your busy seminar and impressive workshop schedule, I only hope that your program planners have left some room for you to enjoy a few of the attractions of the immediate world beyond these four walls.

My appreciation, of course, is for being chosen to present this Kingsley Memorial Lecture. The lecture itself honors a man of remarkable persuasion and accomplishment in the field of education. It also honors those who have been selected to present this annual lecture, and I am proud to be the newest in that roster. It is distinguished company indeed. I have only to reach back to last year in Portland, Oregon, to

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realize that I am following in the platform footsteps of one of the most respected leaders and pioneers in the field of public relations, Edward Bernays. For many years, I have been his student and his advocate. At times, too, on the subject of licensing for public relations practitioners, I have debated vigorously on the other side of his argument for that cause. But in matters of principle and practice and the counsel which he gave you in his scholarly presentation last year, there can be no debate. They are tablets from the mountain of his experience and study and I commend a re-reading of his 1978 lecture to you at least on an annual basis.

Like Edward Bernays and all those who have preceded me on this Kingsley platform, my association with education has been a love affair of a career lifetime. And it grows stronger the second and third time around. It has taken two directions. The first is in education for public relations - both at the academic level and in professional education beyond the campus. For the most part, this has been rooted in the work of the professional organization with which I am associated, the Public Relations Society of America, and its unique associate group, the Foundation for Public Relations Research and Education.

Both have given me the happy and productive opportunity to work with colleges, their students and faculty, and the American Association for Education in Journalism, in helping to structure sequences for contemporary education in the field we share. Just two months ago, at the Eighth World Congress of Public Relations held in London, I had the honor of introducing the Belgian who was the Foundation's first international lecturer.

Having confessed my particular prejudice, it will come as no special surprise to know that the subject we chose for his address was "Education for Public Relations - the European View."

At this moment, a PRSA Task Force is developing a formal curriculum for professional practitioners - courses of study designed to be self-administered as well as supplemented through seminars.

I mention such efforts as these because they complement - and in many ways, parallel - similar efforts of your own organization, The National School Public Relations Association. And one of messages today expresses the hope that our respective organizations might share their work and progress in this mutual effort to upgrade our skills and performance - and to provide substance and recognition and credentials for the field of public relations. We owe that to ourselves and to those to whom we are accountable in our work. But beyond that, we owe that to the future of public relations and its unique function in a democratic society.

I hope those convictions have struck a responsive cord with many of you. The vision of working together in the interest of professionalism is one which we can make a reality - not only for ourselves, but for those who follow us.

I mentioned that my love affair with education has had two directions. The second is a broader one - encompassing elementary, secondary and college education. And it is rooted in the commitment which my company - like many others - has to education. And it is this second direction which I have chosen for my primary subject of my remarks to you today.

I have assumed my license to do so from several sources. First, because I represent the business community and many of my day-to-day responsibilities relate to business and education. Second because, in our preliminary conversations about this lecture, John Wherry told me that members of NSPRA had cited as one of your prime concerns that of working with the business community.

Let me turn that latter statement around: one of the prime concerns of an enlightened business community should be that of working with education.

I'd like to testify to that from the viewpoint of the business which I represent - the Bell System. I suppose one could say - as I often do! - that our commitment to education began when a teacher of deaf children invented a curious device called a telephone. But there are other reasons for that commitment, too, and they are shared by many businesses large and small. Let's tackle some of the bottom line reasons.

1. Students and teachers are customers of business. They deserve to know how to use products and services effectively and economically.

2. When education prepares students for good jobs, they'll become better customers, productive members of a healthy, thriving community, and informed decision-makers in our political and economic process.

3. When the educational system does <u>not</u> prepare students for good jobs, the burden of remedial education and training falls on business, and that can be an extremely costly problem. These higher costs in money and time not only penalize the business community, but its customers, the community-at-large, and - most important - the students themselves who have been short-changed in their formal education.

4. Business pays taxes to support public education. For example, my company's tax bill for education in this state amounts to about $6 million a month. Business has a responsibility to care that these taxes are used well.

5. And finally, there is a deeper, personal reason for involvement and caring on the part of business: Students are the children of employees. The quality of their learning environment is - should be - of personal concern to every business - as a corporation and as a community of individuals who work together. The skills, attitudes, and values which their children - students in your school systems -

are learning today will profoundly affect the quality of their lives in the future.

Those five reasons - and I'm sure there are more - are fundamental ones to my business when we're asked, "Why are you so involved with education?" From your viewpoint - the concern you've expressed about working with the business community - I'm suggesting, of course, that you might use them as persuasive points when you wish to mobilize business in your community to understand and support your educational goals.

There are many reasons why this objective has value. An obvicus one is that business and business people have influence. Or to use a word more indiginous to Chicago and a former mayor named Daley - they have "clout." Education needs their interest and support. You cannot afford to ignore them. The risk that they will set other priorities for public monies is too strong. Their opposition, their lack of understanding about the needs and purposes of education can have severe

consequences, and I'm sure that some - if not many - of you wear scars as witness to that.

Another reason is that business today has resources - beyond those of taxes - which can be highly supportive of the educational process. These resources of materials, people and skills are invaluable to teaching. They can also be invaluable in administration - where the management experience and ability of business can be applied to one of this nation's biggest growth industries - education. The climate for a cooperative relationship between business and education was never more receptive, in my view.

Despite the discouraging words we hear, Gallup tells us that 50% of the American public is optimistic about our system of education.

Last April I'm sure that many of you read with unusual joy and relief the results of a Gallup poll reported in PARADE magazine. It was a survey of more than a thousand students,

aged 13 to 18, asking them their opinion of the performance of their schools and teachers and their ideas for improvement of their educational experience. One of the primary findings reinforced what other surveys had told us and what you and I in our work with students already knew: by and large, today's student wants to work harder, be more challenged in school. And as a corollary to that strong work orientation, they want more preparation for future careers.

Those of you, like I, who remember 1969 as almost the day-before-yesterday can take a special pleasure in that miraculous turnaround in attitude which has occurred in the past decade. "Work" is no longer a dirty word in the vocabulary of the young. But it is "work" with a difference. It is not simply a job - a means to a paycheck that they're talking about. The job a student wants to prepare for today is much more than earning a living; it's making a life. It's an activity around which he or she will organize much of his waking experiences and through which he - or she - hopes to establish a meaningful, rewarding life. It infers self-respect and respect for others; social contacts; a creative use of human potential.

It was, after all, John Dewey's thesis that a person's occupation or career plan supplies a unity to the educational experience. Thus culture and career are not antagonistic as some might have us believe. Rather, they are symbiotic: a career direction or motivation can make culture more vital and significant for students.

But where does today's student find that motivation for a career which fulfills a lifetime? In the home? Unfortunately, not often. At least not with the vast majority of inner city youth. And all too often that holds true for students in the suburbs and smaller communities, too. Their role models in the home and family are limited, too. Do they find motivation and role models in the schools? All too often, the answer is also "Unfortunately, no."

Making teachers the sole source of information about contemporary careers is an unfair burden to place solely on them, most of whom have committed their entire professional lives to education per se. Can textbooks, films and booklets help? Yes, but technology alone - accelerating at a geometric pace - often outdates such resources instantly. We are faced with a knowledge and technological revolution that creates new jobs, new careers every day and outdates or changes traditional jobs. Only the people who are on its leading edge - actually working

in the business or profession - can report it accurately and make a job come alive to a student.

This knowledge challenge is dramatized by the story of the two first graders who were out in the school yard when two jets from the Glenview Naval Air Station went by overhead. One of the first graders looked up and said, "Boy, the thermonuclear problems they must have when they bust through the sound-barrier."

The other youngster said, "Yes, but they've coated them with a kind of ceramic now that dissipates the heat." Just then the bell rang to end the recess. The first lad turned to the other and said, "Well, it's time to go back in and string some more of those darned beads."

The knowledge explosion, It challenges all of us to catch up and keep up. Yes, technology is revolutionizing the job and career opportunities today. And the gap between high school graduates and the jobs they want - and yes, the jobs which are there for the claiming - are widening. 14

What - who - can help to close this gap?

This brings me to a new and enlightened, expanding and demanding role for business in the educational process.

Specifically, it takes me to the case study I want to cite from this community in which you are meeting this week. To paraphrase the theme of your National Seminar, it is a report on "Forging a Partnership - Schools and Business."

In 1976, Chicago United, a consortium of the city's 20 major employers and representatives of minority communities, appointed a blue ribbon Task Force to study how business, working with the public school system, could help in the effort to produce graduates better prepared to meet the demands of today's labor market. The work and objectives of the Task Force had the complete blessing and cooperation of the Chicago Board of Education.

There was ample evidence 1) that business had a role to play, a responsibility and vested interest in helping to improve education and 2) that students needed better motivation and top quality information about jobs, about the values of the world of work and about the process for making intelligent career choices. The effort which business should spearhead appeared to be a comprehensive program of career education.

The Chicago United Task Force defined two primary objectives at the outset. First, to develop a systematic process for delivering career education experiences to every Chicago school child, whose right, the Task Force asserted, was to receive such experiences. Second, to implement that systematic process and recruit the resources of people, money and materials needed for its operation.

Nearly a year of study and consultation with school administrators and experts in career education resulted in the design of a comprehensive plan for the Chicago Public Schools called, "Career Education: A Blueprint for Action in Chicago." Providing definitions, objectives and recommendations for a career education delivery system, and strategies to recruit the needed resources, this document was presented to Chicago United and to the General Superintendent of Schools. It was received with enthusiasm and made public at a press conference in February, 1977.

Last year, the Blueprint's recommendations were fully implemented in two pilot school districts in Chicago. Funding was secured from private foundations to employ a full-time career education manager on the staff of Chicago United to leverage participation by the total business community.

Each of the 2900 teachers in the two pilot districts attended an eight-hour in-service training meeting and received a teacher's guide.

In late summer and fall of 1978, intensive recruiting efforts in the business community began. These efforts reached to the Chicago Association of Commerce and Industry, professional and trade associations, and the Illinois legislature's Urban Education Committee. A basic tool was an audio-visual presentation. There was also an information brochure, together with a recruiting questionnaire, sent to 3,000 major employers, 140 technical and professional associations, 32 local chambers of commerce and 21 service clubs. Special information efforts were also directed to PTA's in the pilot districts.

Each business firm, professional or trade association participating in the program was asked to appoint a career education coordinator to be responsible for that organization's involvement. A full-day training curriculum was designed for these coordinators and 70 were trained at the outset.

A major component of the Blueprint is the Career Development Centers Network. These centers are alternative programs drawing junior-year students from all of the city's 70 high schools to attend class each afternoon for a full semester at a sponsoring company's location. Students receive credit for one or two academic subjects studied in the work environment. Each class has a teacher; class lecturers are career people from business, labor, government, the community-at-large.

There are now 15 Career Development Centers - with the capacity to serve 1200 students. Where are the centers? Among the sponsors and courses are:

Montgomery Ward	- Sales and Retail Management
Blue Cross/Blue Shield	- Health Care & Health Insurance
Three banks	- Economics and Business Studies
The Shedd Aquarium	- Maritime Studies
Holiday Inn-Mart Plaza	- Hotel/Motel Operations
Midway Airport	- Air Transport Industry
Chicago Circle Campus	- Architecture & Urban Studies
and Illinois Bell	- Urban Communications

There is also a sophomore year version of the centers designed to serve as a feeder into the junior year program. <u>There are eight sophomore classes</u>. Among the sponsors are City Hall, The Chicago Association of Commerce and Industry, People's Gas, Western Electric. The capacity of the sophomore center programs is now at 4700, and this doesn't include the nearly 150 students who took part in Standard Oil's excellent program in computer occupations.

Beyond these outside classes, teachers in the two pilot districts have used more than 1100 career speakers this year, each of whom were prepared in advance for their appearance in the classroom. Teachers also requested more than 600 guides for job site visits or field trips, nearly 2,000 publications and more than 1,000 films for use in classroom activities. There is now a Teacher's Resource Guide, with lesson plan ideas and tips for integrating career education into the K through 12 curriculum.

There is now a permanent staff at the Chicago Board of Education dedicated to career education. It includes 19 teachers assigned to the junior career development centers, 4 for the sophomore year centers, and 4 staff people to assist the districts in coordinating career education programs, teacher training and recruitment of small business firms in school communities.

This past year, more than 51,000 students participated in career education in just the two school districts. In the year ahead, that number will grow to 195,000, with 11 districts participating.

In January, we'll be adding two new junior year career centers - one with Arthur Andersen and a course on Management Studies, another with Rush Presbyterian St. Luke's Hospital and a course on Health and Medical Careers, and a sophomore center featuring careers in insurance.

I'll stop right there with the litany of results. No, one more. There is an independent newspaper, called New Expression, published by students drawn from throughout Chicago public schools. Without our knowledge, this young and able group of tough, investigative reporters researched the Career Development Centers on their own and gave them straight "A" grades. And that was the finest report card our group of business and education faculty and administrators ever received!

I shall be happy to provide further and more specific details of this partnership program to anyone who would like to have them.

Obviously my time limitations and your listening patience should not be stretched.

While I am personally enthusiastic about this particular program and its documented results and would be delighted if it inspires just one of you to explore, adapt or improve on it, my fundamental point is a much larger one: it is to underscore the need for stronger community partnership with the schools. Specifically, that is a partnership with the business community, which can make unique contributions and unique resources available to schools and students. Have you, as communicators, much to gain in this process? Absolutely.

Count the ways with me.

It opens a line of communication with one of your most vital and influential constituencies.

It is a means for communicating and interpreting the needs and objectives of your school system not only to business, but to the larger community.

It expands your power base. (And I shall not enlarge on that because you can see the advantages of that vision far more accurately than I.)

It meets the documented needs of students, gives them a career goal, thus increasing their motivation to study today to reach that goal.

It brings the schools and what they are accomplishing to the attention of the community, makes them - and teachers and students - more visible (and they are impressive to the beholder).

And I cannot omit one advantage - so dearly sought by all professional communicators such as we: it gives you something positive to communicate about. In that sense, it is both a sword of defense for you, who are so beleagured by problems and issues and diminishing funds, and a plowshare which helps to nurture students and education for their future.

In speaking of how beleagured and pressured and stressed you are between the attacks and great expectations which erupt daily from your many publics, that's illustrated by a story told by my company's president. It's become a favorite of mine, too. It's about the lady who was getting along in years - in fact, she was old enough to have a grandson. One day, she and her little grandson were walking along the beach when a great wave came sweeping in from the ocean. The wave tore the woman's grandson right out of her hands and carried the child out to sea, out of sight into the ocean.

Well, this grandmother immediately fell upon her knees - as you might if you have a religious background - and she looked up to the heavens and pleaded, "Lord, Lord, if you will bring back my grandson, I will forever commit myself to Christian life. I'll forever worship You. I'll work for You and I'll pour my money into the coffers of the church - if only you'll spare my grandson and bring him back!"

With that, another huge wave rolled in, even bigger than the first one, and deposited her grandson back up on the sand in front of her. The little boy was crying and coughing, but he was obviously very much alive. Then the grandmother got off her knees, brushed herself off, looked up towards the heavens and shouted indignantly, "He had a hat!"

Indeed, these days, people expect a lot of the institutions that serve them, especially the schools.

Do not, I implore you - as communicators and as spokesmen and advocates for the precious treasure of education - become paranoid.

Rather, I urge you to reach for partnership. And most particularly, to demand more of the potential partner you have in business.

We - you in education, I in business, both in public relations - need not be merely communicators in this process. We can be counselors, initiators, catalysts making a major contribution to the substance of education in our communities and in our country. It is an exciting partnership which I am convinced will serve you well.